

Message Text

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ACTION AF-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 COME-00 EB-07 INR-07
LAB-04 NSAE-00 SIL-01 AID-05 PC-01 DODE-00 PM-04
H-01 L-03 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 /080 W
-----210327Z 103187 /75

R 200906Z MAY 77
FM AMEMBASSY FREETOWN
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5407
USIA WASHDC
INFO AMEMBASSY ABIDJAN
AMEMBASSY ACCRA
AMEMBASSY CONAKRY
AMEMBASSY DAKAR
AMEMBASSY LAGOS
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY MONROVIA

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USIA FOR IAA
LONDON FOR SEITZ
DAKAR PLEASE POUCH TO BANJUL

EO 11652: NA
TAGS: PINS, PINT, SL
SUBJ: "LONDON"TIMES" AND "WE YONE" EXCHANGE BARBS

REF: FREETOWN 1486

1. FOR THE LAST FOUR YEARS, SIERRA LEONE HAD A ONE-PARTY
PARLIAMENT (AND GOVERNMENT) MADE UP ENTIRELY OF PRESIDENT
SIAKA STEVENS' ALL PEOPLES CONGRESS. EARLY IN THE RECENT
ELECTION CAMPAIGN, STEVENS PROMISED THAT THE ELECTIONS WOULD
BE CONDUCTED FREELY AND FAIRLY. HOWEVER, EVIDENCE SOON AC-
CUMULATED THAT COERCION AND INTIMIDATION OF VOTERS TOOK PLACE
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AND STEVENS HIMSELF ADMITTED THE OCCURANCE OF VIOLENCE AND
KILLINGS IN SEVERAL AREAS OF THE COUNTRY. STILL, THE FACT THAT
15 OPPOSITION PARLIAMENTARIANS HAVE BEEN ELECTED ALREADY MAKES
THE CURRENT SIERRA LEONE POLITICAL SCENE DIFFERENT FROM THE
FREQUENT PATTERN OF ONE-PARTY REGIMES IN AFRICA.

2. RECOGNIZING THAT THE ELECTION OF OPPOSITION MEMBERS TO PARILA-

MENT IN AFRICA IS UNCOMMON, THE LONDON TIMES OF MAY 10, NEVERTHELESS WAS SHARPLY CRITICAL OF THE CONDUCT OF THE ELECTIONS, STATING UNEQUIVOCALLY THAT "A FREE AND FAIR ELECTION WOULD ALMOST CERTAINLY HAVE UNSEATED PRESIDENT STEVENS' GOVERNMENT". THE ARTICLE ACCUSED STEVENS OF ENSURING HIS PARTY'S VICTORY BY USING REPRESSIVE METHODS "AKIN TO THOSE ALLEGED AGAINST PRESIDENT BHUTTO IN PAKISTAN". INDEED, CONTINUES THE ARTICLE, "TAKING SCALE INTO CONSIDERATION WHAT HAPPENED IN SIERRA LEONE WAS ARGUABLY FAR WORSE". SIERRA LEONE'S ELECTIONS WERE COMPARED UNFAVORABLY WITH THOSE RECENTLY HELD IN GAMBIA, THE LATTER CHARACTERIZED AS BEING "BEYOND CAVIL". THE ARTICLE CONCLUDES BY SAYING THAT STEVENS RULES BY "THE GRACE OF HIS INTERNAL SERVICE (SECURITY) AND BY RIOT POLICE"; THE ELECTIONS DEMONSTRATE THAT STEVENS "CANNOT AND DOES NOT RULE BY CONSENT".

3. SIERRA LEONE'S GOVERNMENT PAPER, WE YONE REACTED STRONGLY TO THE TIMES CRITICISM, CALLING BRITISH JOURNALISM "VERY, VERY SICK", AND DESCRIBING THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT AS NOW "WALKING ON A VERY LAME LEG." WE YONE'S EDITORIAL CALLED FOR "A MASSIVE BOYCOTT OF ALL THINGS BRITISH BY AFRICAN STATES...A COMPLETE BOYCOTT OF THE COMING COMMONWEALTH SUMMIT", AND ALSO ALLEGED CIA IMPLICATION IN CREATING TROUBLE IN AFRICA BY "FINANCING DISSIDENT GROUPS." CONTINUING, WE ONE SAYS, "ALL OF THIS IS KNOWN TO THE BRITISH PRESS, BUT STILL, ALTHOUGH THEY SAY NOTHING ABOUT IT, BRITAIN PRIDES ITSELF ON BEING CALLED THE WORLD'S GREATEST DEMOCRACY. THAT DEMOCRACY LIES IN STIRRING UP TROUBLE OR IN CONDONING IT. THE EVIDENCE WHICH IS COMING FROM A SECTION OF THE BRITISH PRESS IS THAT BRITAIN CAN NEVER BE A FRIEND OF AFRICA..."

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4. WE YONE CONTINUED "A MASSIVE BOYCOTT OF ALL THINGS BRITISH BY AFRICAN STATES COULD SPELL DISASTER FOR BRITAIN. AND IT IS WORTH THINKING ABOUT. BECAUSE THE BRITISH PRESS IS NOT SUPPOSED TO BE INVOLVED IN ANY PLAN TO DESTROY THE CONCEPT OF DEMOCRACY WHICH WE ARE TRYING TO BUILD IN AFRICA. THEY ARE NOT SUPPOSED TO KNOW THAT CERTAIN BRITISH INTERESTS, LIKE THE CIA OF AMERICAN, ARE FINANCING DISSIDENT GROUPS TO CREATE TROUBLE IN AFRICA. BY THEIR UTTERANCES, THEY SHOW HOW MUCH INVOLVED THEY ARE. THE AMERICANS HAVE A CONSCIENCE ABOUT THIS. UNFORTUNATELY, AS FAR AS THE BRITISH ARE CONCERNED, CONSCIENCE IS ABSOLUTELY LACKING. EVIDENCE? LOOK TO THE TIMES OF LONDON".

5. EMBASSY COMMENT: WE HAVE ALWAYS ASSUMED THAT WE YONE AS ACKNOLEDGED APC ORGAN ACCURATELY REFLECTS THE SENTIMENTS OF GOSL LEADERSHIP. THIS ASSUMPTION WAS REINFORCED BY STEVENS' DECISION TO CALL IN THE BRITISH HIGH COMMISSIONER ROBERTS TO PROTEST THE TIMES ARTICLE PRIOR TO PUBLICATION OF THE WE YONE EDITORIAL. ROBERTS DESCRIBED STEVENS AS "IRATE" DURING DISCUSSION. WE VIEW THE WE YONE EDITORIAL AS A PUBLIC WARNING TO BRITISH

INTERESTS IN SIERRA LEONE THAT THE GOSL IS PREPARED TO CALL
NAMES IN PUBLIC IF PRESS CRITICIZES TOO STRONGLY SIERRA LEONE'S
INTERNAL POLITICS.

6. BUT SIERRA LEONE IS TOO HEAVILY DEPENDENT ON BRITAIN FOR THE
PURCHASE OF ITS COMMODITIES AND THE FURNISHING OF TECHNICAL
AND MATERIAL ASSISTANCE TO ALLOW THE MATTER TO ESCALATE OUT OF
CONTROL. STEVENS AND THE APC ARE WELL AWARE OF THEIR DIMINISHED
POPULARITY AND THAT A RETURN TO NORMALCY CAN ONLY BE GUARANTEED
BY THE THREAT OF FORCE. BUT THEY ARE EVIDENTLY DEEPLY RESENTFUL
OF ANYTHING THAT CALLS THE OUTSIDE WORLD'S ATTENTION TO THE
MEANS BY WHICH THEY RETAIN POWER. END COMMENT. SAMUELS

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01-Jan-1994 12:00:00 am
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: PRESS COMMENTS, GOVERNMENT REACTIONS, ALLEGATIONS, ELECTION FRAUD
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Sent Date: 20-May-1977 12:00:00 am
Decaption Date: 01-Jan-1960 12:00:00 am
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1977FREETO01620
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D770181-0297
Format: TEL
From: FREETOWN
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1977/newtext/t19770537/aaaabfjm.tel
Line Count: 128
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: ac31408f-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION AF
Original Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 77 FREETOWN 1486
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 19-Nov-2004 12:00:00 am
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 2441560
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: \"LONDON\"TIMES\" AND \"WE YONE\" EXCHANGE BARBS
TAGS: PINS, PINT, SOPN, SL, UK
To: STATE USIA
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odb://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/ac31408f-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
22 May 2009
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009